

Part I

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillāhi ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm

In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Mercy Giving

The letter *bā* in the *bismillāh*, which can be translated as “In the name of Allāh” or “by the name of Allāh” has many meanings. The most common interpretation of it is that it is the *al-ba as-sababbiyyah*, the “causal *bā*”, meaning that everything is caused by the name of Allah. However, this is not entirely correct within this context. What is meant here is that everything comes into existence as a manifestation (*tajallī*) of Allāh. This is referred to in many verses, such as:

هو الأول و الآخر و الظاهر و الباطن

He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden.¹

هو معكم أينما كنتم

He is with you wherever you are²

فأينما تولو فثم وجه الله

Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allāh.³

What is the significance of the *bā*? Imām ‘Alī says: “I am the dot under the *bā*.” Know that every letter of the Arabic alphabet has spiritual significance, for every letter of the Arabic alphabet represents a number, and as Pythagoras taught, the universe is made of numbers. This is clear to those who are endowed with perception. The *bā* represents the number two. It comes after the left *alif*, ۱, which is a single, straight line with nothing on either side. The *alif* represents the Divine Essence, which neither exists nor does not exist, and for which there is nothing alongside of it, for it simply *is* and on its level (*ritbah*) there is simply *nothing* else. The *alif* creates by creating the *ba muhamalah*, the “undotted ba”, which is the *alif* turned on its side and formed into a concavely curved line with no dot underneath. This represents the primordial Cloud, or the Divine Command, which emerges from nothing and therefore cannot be grasped by reason. It is referred to in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet where he is asked: “Where was your Lord before the Creation?” He responded by saying: “He was in a Cloud, with neither air above it or below.” The fact that he says neither air above it or below means that he is not referring to a physical cloud, but is rather using the word cloud as an *upaya* and metaphor that must be subject to *ta’wīl* (spiritual exegesis) by those who are fixed and knowledge and those who are the students of those fixed in knowledge. This in accordance with the *ḥadīth* of Imām ‘Alī where he says: “We are the teachers, our Shī’ah [followers] are the students, and the rest of humanity are the froth rolling on the waves.”

¹ 57:3

² 57:4

³ 2:115.

The undotted *bā* is not a letter. Without a dot to distinguish it, it looks identical to many other letters in the Arabic alphabet and therefore remains unclear, vague, and nebulous. The same applies to the Divine Command. Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq says: “Allāh created the Will from itself, then created everything else from the Will.” The Will is the undotted *bā*. Therefore, in order for it to take shape, it must have a dot which defines it and makes it what it is.

That dot is the Light of Imām ‘Alī ibn ‘Abī Ṭālib. How? Because Allāh is Infinite, and therefore has an infinite number of personalities. He says in a *ḥadīth qudsī* “I am with My servant’s opinion of me. If good, then I am good, if evil, then I am evil.” Allāh is the All, everything and all that can be. The human being cannot relate to the infinite unless he himself is infinite, and one with Allāh. Therefore the finite human being, when he enters into a relationship with Allāh, can only enter into a relationship with a finite aspect of Him. Similarly, when He manifests Himself to His Creation, He can only manifest Himself in a finite form. As Imām al-‘Muizz put it:

Voluntarily, the Creator manifested Himself by means of a physical form, of the adamic, human body, by affability for His creatures, by mercy for them and by pity; knowing that it was not in their capacity to stand Him; because if He has manifested Himself to them without resembling them, they would not have been able to get near Him.

That finite form is the Imām. He is the one who makes *brahma* into *ishvara*, that makes the infinite, impersonal Godhead into a personal deity. The Imām *is* the personal God. The physical Imām of the Age represents one finite aspect of Allāh, and his physical personality represents one of the finite aspects of Allāh. There are an infinite number of Imāms because there are infinite ways in which Allāh can become manifest. As Allāh has said:

Say: If the oceans were ink and the trees were pens and there were another seven oceans of ink to back it up, the words of your Lord would never be expended.⁴

Notice that he uses the number seven to describe the number of oceans. The number seven represents the cycle of speaking Prophets and the number of cycles of Imāms after the Prophet Muḥammad, with each cycle consisting of seven Imāms, with the seventh-seventh (the 49th, Mawlānā Ḥāḍir Imām) being the Mahdī who ends the cycle of darkness and prepares the way for the *qā’im*, who gives new life to the world and causes it to be reborn. The words of the Lord are infinite, and the words of the Lord here refers to the physical Imāms, who are the indicators (*dalā’il*) pointing towards Allāh. By being the dot under the *bā*, the Imām makes Allāh into a personal deity that can be prayed to and worshipped, and which the human being can enter into. This is the secret of ‘*Alī Sahī Allāh*, “Indeed, Ali is Allāh” taught by Imām Shāh ‘Alī Shāh.

Each Imām is a successive manifestation of one of the infinite personalities of Allāh. They are therefore the dot that makes the Imām into the personal deity that one can have a relationship with. The Imām is a microcosmic representation of the matrix of the universe at any given point, and therefore represents the “mood” of the cosmos as a manifestation of Allāh. As one Imām passes and another Imām comes to take his place,

⁴ 18:109

the Imām of Light is merely taking off one cloak and putting another on. The Imām, in his Body of Light, is eternal and unchanging, absolutely one. But the physical Imāms change from place to place. Some are kind and gentle; some are harsh and strong. Some are sad, some are happy. Every possible way of being is manifested in the infinite lineage of Imāms.

Who is Allāh? What does it mean to say that everything comes into being from the Name of Allāh? Allāh is, first and foremost, a name. Know that Allāh created the Divine Names, for He has no need to name Himself in order to identify Himself. The Name of Allāh is a referent to the Universal Intellect, which is the first creation (*mubdāʾ*) of the Divine Essence. The Divine Essence issues its command, its *ibdāʾ*, and this produces the Universal Intellect. The Universal Intellect is Pure Being (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), and is the repository of all the archetypes of all that exists. It is one with the Divine Command; it is the Infinite, whereas the Divine Essence is the Absolute Void. The union of the command with the Intellect is referred to by the *dāʾir* Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī in his *Raḥāt al-ʿAql*:

Insofar as there are many actions, and every action which obtains existence has a name that distinguishes it ontologically from other existing entities. The act of creation (*ibdāʾ*) is an action, and what makes it unique is that it is created *ex nihilo*, and that there is Nothing which precedes it in existence such that it would be a substrate for it. There is no intermediary between it and between what existentiates it, no tool used, not on anything. It is referred to as the act of creation in order to make it known that it is existent and that it has an entity in existence, and that it exists without anything preceding it. Our words thus far necessitate that it be a single entity, and when we refer to the creation (*mubdāʾ*) must be two things: the command that creates it, and that it must be a creation (*mubdāʾ*) that comes through existence via the act of creation itself. It is well known that the subject is what, through its action, makes the object an object, and that the action is one thing and the object of the action is another thing. But it is impossible that there could be anything that precedes the act of creation, such that the act of creation would be like a receiving substrate...Each one of its two aspects would become different from its other aspect by virtue of what is unique about it, and this would mean that there must exist that which both their existences come from together. Since this is impossible, this means that the act of creation is identical to the creation, and the creation is identical to the act of creation.⁵

Nāṣir Khusraw refers to this when he writes:

As far as what you said concerning the Creator, asking what His nature was after the universe was created and what was the modality of His existence, and that if after the coming of creation the Creator becomes a Creator and Sovereign as opposed to what He was before, then it is necessary to know that the Creator and the creation are all in the command of the Creator, the Glorified and Exalted, entirely, and that nothing in it is farther ahead and in a state that it becomes. The command from the Creator is His Effect, and has no parts, and the effect from him is like the writing of a secretary which the essence of secretary is not in, in anyway. However, the Ipseity of the Creator is exalted above matter, intermediary, potentiality, imagine, gaze, and action. The command is from Him – may His Name be glorified – in the station where His Essence is, and everything that exists and is existent is contained within it.⁶

The Universal Intellect is named *Allāh*, deriving from the word *wulh*, which means passionate, ecstatic, all consuming love. It feels such love for the Divine Essence which originated it, and in its intoxication it literally ceases to exist, for alongside the Divine Essence there is nothing. On its own level (*ritbah*), though, it is Pure Being,

⁵ Kirmānī, Ḥamīd ad-Dīn. *Raḥāt al-ʿAql*. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, year unknown. p. 176.

⁶ Khusraw, Nāṣir. *Gushāyash va Rahāyash*. London: IIS, 2003 [Persian section]. p. 4.

extending out to infinity, encompassing an infinite number of worlds with an infinite variety of peoples and histories. As Imām al-Bāqir said: “Do you suppose that Allah has created this single world and He has not created any other beings apart from you. Yes, by Allah, He has created a thousand thousand worlds and a thousand thousand Adams and you are in the last of those worlds.”

The Name *ar-raḥmān*, the “most merciful,” signifies the universal mercy (*ar-raḥmah al-‘āmmah*) of Allāh, which is the very mercy (*raḥmah*) of existence itself. It is the mercy that is spoken of when Allāh says:

رَبَّنَا رَحْمَتَهُ رَسَعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

Our Lord, whose mercy embraces all things.⁷

The name *ar-raḥīm* refers to the special mercy (*ar-raḥmah al-khāṣṣah*) which is given to the believers and the believers alone. It is the mercy of guidance to the Imām of the age, which is the greatest mercy of all. Both mercies come through the Imām. It is because the Imām is the dot under the *bā* that the Divine Command can be manifest and that the world can become manifest, and it is because of the Imām that the world exists. This is because, in his Body of Light, he contains all things as the locus of manifestation (*mazhar*) of the Divine Command. Similarly, the mercy of guidance comes through him, for Allāh has said to the Prophet:

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْظَرٌ وَ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

Indeed, you are but a warner and to every people there is a guide.⁸

Therefore both mercies come through his intermediary. The path of return is the same as the path of origin.

الحمد لله ربّ العالمين

Alḥamdu lillāhi rabb al-‘alāmin

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Universes

After this we say in the *du‘ā* “The Praise be to Allāh, Lord of the Universes.” The Praise (*al-ḥamd*) means all praise, meaning that there is nothing that is praised except Allāh, for nothing exists except Allāh. Every beautiful face is merely a manifestation of Allāh. Specifically, the praise refers to the *du‘ā* itself, which encapsulates the totality of praise by naming all of the Imāms who have manifested themselves thus far, and by bearing witness to Allāh in the most beautiful form possible. He is the *rabb* of the universe, the Guardian-Lord, who protects and rears the universe in its cosmic evolution towards universal enlightenment. We are all His *marbūb*, those He takes care of and nurtures. There is more than one universe, hence why we say lord of the universes (*‘alāmin*). There are more than one vertically and more than one horizontally. Vertically, there is the world of the Universal Intellect, where there is no time, but only Eternity (*dahr*). Then there is the Universal Soul, which emanates from the Universal Intellect’s contemplation of itself, which contains circular time (*zamān*).

⁷ 40:7

⁸ 13:7

Then there is the Universal Body, the physical matter, which comes from the Universal Intellect's contemplation of itself as a created and originated entity. These three levels are the levels of *jabarūt*, *malakūt*, and *mulk*. Horizontally, every universe has a parallel universe, and every possible thing that can be, exists somewhere across the multiverse (the totality of universes). The creation, therefore, is infinite.

The *ḥamd* also refers to Aḥmad, the Prophet Muḥammad. He is known as *Aḥmad*, which means "I praise." He represents the "I" of the Universal Soul that emanates from the Universal Intellect, and is a hypostasis of the Universal Intellect's love for the Divine Essence. His praise is his song of love, like the song of the reed pipe (*neh*), forever yearning to return to its source (the *nehistan*), but never able to do so. It circles forever in search of its beloved, and so the name "I praise" is in the present (*muḍari'*) tense, which can also mean the future tense, since the praise of the Universal Soul is constant and infinite. The verse, therefore, means that the Universal Soul (Aḥmad) is for the Universal Intellect (Allāh), its eternal beloved.

الرحمن الرحيم ملك يوم الدين

Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim Maliki Yawm ad-Din

The Merciful, the Mercy Giving, King of the Day of Judgment

We then go on to reaffirm that He is *ar-raḥmān* and *ar-raḥīm*, and then go on to address Him as the "King of the Day of Judgment." The word here is *dīn*, which means religion, so it is really the "Day of Religion." The Day of Religion is the day that the religion moves from one stage of its evolution to another, and the cosmic consciousness rises from one level to another. It is the day of *qiyāmah*, of rising. Such days come in cycles. The religion is divided into "weeks," each day being a thousand years in length. The seventh day, the Sabbath, is the last day and is the day in which the spiritual resurrection occurs. Therefore every 7,000 years the universe goes through a grand, spiritual *qiyāmah* where everything is changed and the intellects of the people become opened up to all spiritual truths. The human race is judged. Those who are found to be on the path of the Imām, will rejoin his Light joyously, and those who are found to be wanting, will be burned by the intensity of His Light. As Allāh says in the Qur'an:

أشرقَت الأرض بنور ربِّها

The Earth will shine with the Light of its Lord.

Commenting on this verse, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq said: "The Lord of the Earth is the Imām of the Earth. His Light will be so bright, human beings will no longer need the sun." Allāh is the King of the Day of Judgment, and once again we return to the theme of *Ali Sahī Allāh*, for it is Imām 'Alī that will be the judge that day. As the Prophet said:

O 'Alī! On the Day of Judgment you will be brought forward on a camel made of Light. On your head there will be a crown, with four pillars. On each pillar, there will be written three times: 'There is no God but Allāh, Muḥammad is the Prophet of Allāh, and 'Alī is the key to Paradise'. A seat known as the Seat of Nobility will be placed for you, and you will be placed upon it. All beings from the beginning of the world to the end will be brought before you on a single plane. And you will command your Shī'ahs to

enter the paradise, and your enemies to enter Hell. And so you are the one who shall apportion heaven and Hell. Joyous is the one who loves you, ruined and lost is the one who hates. On that day, you are the Trustworthy of Allāh, and His most manifest Proof.⁹

إياك نعبد و إياك نستعين

Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in

You alone do we worship, from you alone do we seek aid.

This is a statement of the unity of existence, for it is impossible to worship anything other than Allāh, because there is nothing else except the Universal Intellect. It is a statement of fact, not a prayer; no matter whether the person believes in this or not, it is Allāh alone that we worship and from Allāh alone that we seek aid. As Imām Ḥusayn said: “There is no light seen except His Light, and no voice heard except His Voice.”

إهدنا الصراط المستقيم

Ihdinā as-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm

Guide us to the straight path.

We then say: “Guide us to the straight path.” This kind of supplication is related to a person's inner capacity for guidance. The Light of Allāh is one, but it radiates upon people in different ways, just as the sun shines on different objects, but reflects back as a variety of different colours. There are many paths to Allāh, as the Prophet has said: “The paths to Allāh are as numerous as the breaths of the human beings,” and as Mawlānā Ḥāḍir Imām Karīm has said, “Every believer has a personal relationship with Me.” The straight path is the shortest path, the one that is free from crookedness and error, and is therefore closest to approaching the infinite. It may not be the same for every person, and so one asks that one be guided to the path that is most appropriate. There are many different paths, many different yogas. There is *bhakti yoga*, which is the foundation (*asās*) of the *ṭarīqah*, which is the path of love for the Imām. Then there is *karma yoga*, which primarily takes the form of *seva* in the *ṭarīqah*, of service to the Imām and the community. This is the most common *yoga* in the *jama'ah*. Then there is *jñāna yoga*, the search for intellectual truth, which is ultimately a quest to have one's mind completely filled with the knowledge of the Universal Intellect. Finally there is *raja yoga*, the quest for spiritual union through meditation and *bandaghi*. All of these are straight paths for those who they are appropriate too.

صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم

Sirāṭ aladhīna an'amta 'alayhim

The path of those whom you have blessed.

Allāh says in the final revelation of the Qur'ān:

اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم و أتممت عليكم نعمتي و رضيت لكم الإسلام ديناً

Today I have perfected my religion and completed my blessing upon you and chosen Islam for you as a religion.¹⁰

⁹ Al-Majlisī. *Biḥār al-Anwār*. Qumm: Ismā'īliyyan, 1304 *hijri*. 7:339.

This verse came down after Ghadīr, and therefore indicates that those for whom the blessing has been complete are those that accepted the *ba'yah* of Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib with sincerity in truth. They were a tiny, tiny minority amongst the Prophets companions. This is because, when the souls were created, only a tiny minority held fast to the *walāyah* (spiritual authority). When Allāh said to the souls: “Am I not your Lord?” they all said yes, but when He said: “Is not Muḥammad my messenger?” only some responded. And then when He asked: “Is not ‘Alī my saint?” only the tiniest fraction of people responded in the affirmative. Everybody has already written the script for their own spiritual lives in this world, and is merely playing out the decision they made at the time of that covenant. Those for whom the blessing is complete are those who understand *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwah*, and *wālayah*, that is monotheism, prophethood, and sainthood. They are those who have tasted of the Light of the Imām and experienced it in their hearts. Therefore, the path of those whom Allāh has blessed is the path of Shī’ism, the path of those who follow the Imām of the Age.

غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين

Ghayr al-Maghḍūb ‘alayhim wa lā ḍālin

Not the path upon whom is your wrath, and not those who are misguided.

Allāh does not have wrath like a normal person. It is common to anthropomorphize God and project onto him human attributes, but this is only an *upaya*, a partial manifestation of religious truth. Imām al-Bāqir explains that the wrath of God is the punishment of God, and the punishment of God is what a person is capable of receiving of the Light of Allāh. Those who are spiritually blind will not be able to bear the Light of Allāh when it becomes manifest to them, and so it will burn them, searing them again and again until finally they are purified. Those who experience the ultimate wrath are those who are spiritually dead and non-existent. The misguided ones are the ones who have chosen a path that is not appropriate to them. Know that every religion is true insofar as it is a manifestation of Pure Being and therefore of Allāh. By virtue of the fact that it exists, it is part of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*). But that does not mean every religion is the straight path. Some are so circuitous that enlightenment will never come, so filled with the darkness of finitude that they offer no hope. The Ismā’īlī *ṭarīqah* is the straight path, thereby being the quickest and the one that will reach the goal with the most speed.

سجد وجهي إليك

Sajada Wajhi Ilayak

My face prostrates before you

This line is a statement of eternal fact. Everybody’s face prostrates before that of the Imām. The Face symbolizes what is manifest within a person, their external form. This line of the *du‘ā* accords with the verse

كلّ من عليها فان

Everything on the earth is perishing.¹¹

Everybody's manifest form is constantly in a state of annihilation. The Light of the Universal Intellect is so intense that every moment it annihilates all that exists, only to bring it back into existence another moment later, equivalent to one unit of Planck's Time, which is 3.3×10^{-44} seconds. This is because what we experience in physical reality is nothing but an illusion. All that exists is the mind, because the Universal Intellect is all that exists. Each one of us has a shard of the Universal Intellect within their own intellect, and it is from that shard they perceive their world, which is one part of the multiverse. Imām 'Alī refers to this when he says:

Your cure is inside you but you do not realize
And your sickness is inside but you do not see
You claim you are a tiny entity
But wrapped up inside of you is the greatest entity
You are the clear book, through whom whose letters the secrets become revealed
So you have no need of anything outside of yourself!
Your thought is within you, but you do not think.

Therefore, the "face" of every person is in fact in a state of total prostration, which is the state of total *annihilation* before Allāh, because the *ẓāhir* does not actually exist. This is part of the reason why the Ismā'īlī *ṭarīqah* abandoned the *ẓāhir* aspect of the faith at Ālamūt in 1165, when the Great Resurrection was declared and the "chains of the Law were broken." This was a movement to the *ḥaqīqah*, to the unitive vision of the Imām, where the Shī'ah *becomes* the Imām by being so consumed in him that he sees everything from his perspective, which is union with all things. That is the reality of everything, though we do not perceive it. Through *raja yoga* we come to realize it, and through *jnaya yoga* we come to understand it, until it fills our very being with such light that one realizes the truth of "Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allāh."

و توكلت عليك

Wa Tawakaltu 'Alayk

I put my trust in you

What does it mean to put one's trust in Allāh? Does it mean that one trusts that all of one's prayers will be answered? Of course not, because everybody knows from experience that this is not the case. Does it mean to trust that whatever happens, happens for the best? But what does "the best" mean? Who defines it, and how?

We have already seen that the general mercy of Allah (*ar-rahmah al-'āmmah*) is the mercy of existence itself. Whatever exists, partakes of the mercy of Allāh, even Yazīd, the murderer of Imām Ḥusayn. We have already seen that "Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allāh." Therefore, and this is the hardest of tasks, one must recognize that everything comes from Allāh, and therefore everything, even the most horrifying, has the beauty of existence. Allāh has said:

¹¹ 55:26

قل: إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ

Say: Indeed, the affair is entirely to Allāh.¹²

And He says:

إِنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكُ وَ أَبْكِي إِنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتُ وَ أَحْيَا إِنَّهُ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَ الْأُنْثَى

Indeed, He is the laughter and the tears, He brings death and brings life, He creates the two mates of male and female.¹³

Notice that the verse does not say: “He is the cause of laughter and tears,” but says Allāh Himself is that laughter and tears. He embraces and encompasses and penetrates all things. When one weeps over something that pains them, over the most agonizing pain there is, even there is Allah. Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq was asked where Allāh is, and said: “Allāh is with the broken-hearted.” As Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh said:

I say that you should endeavor to suit your desire to the event and not the event to your desire. If a wall tumbles down and crushes my foot I must say: ‘That is the best thing that could happen to me... I should, first of all, advise my heirs to learn to desire the thing that happens, and not try to mould events to their desires. It was silly of the poet Omar to write: Ah love, could you and I with Him conspire, to grasp this sorry sche That way lies unhappiness, destruction. It is not sorry scheme of things, and the business, the duty of man, is to get himself into harmony with it. me of things entire. Would we not shatter it to bits, and then remold it nearer to the heart's desire?

How does one do this mighty task? It is not simply a matter of suppressing emotion when terrible things happen. Nor is it an exercise in thought control. It requires seeing everything for what it is. Notice that Allāh said that He is the laughter and the tears. He did not say to get rid of the tears, for that is Him as well. The Prophet said: “If you could see what I see, you would cry much and laugh little.” Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn would sit down for his morning meal and begin weeping over the tragedy of Karbala. Sadness is a part of Allāh’s beautiful creation as much as happiness is. It has to be faced, and embraced, and understood for what it is: a manifestation of Allāh.

Tears are as much a part of life, and the infinity of creation, as is death. Yet nowhere are we counseled to try to eliminate death from the world. To do so would be impossible! The same applies to tears. It must be a part of this life because this universe is infinite. Some of us will be afflicted with more tears than others, but those are the ones whom Allāh is closest too, for Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq has said that Allāh is with the broken-hearted.

This, then, is the meaning of *tawakul*. It means that one understands that *whatever* happens, it is beautiful, because it comes from Allāh. Hallāj wrote of Iblis that he was such a lover of Allāh that even the arrow of the curse that Allāh sent down on him was dear to him. Those who are truly in love will know that even a rejection from

¹² 3:154

¹³ 53:43-45

the Beloved is dear, because it comes from the Beloved. He is the laughter, and He is the tears. This is why whatever occurs, it is for the best. Know that the universes are infinite. There is a world where the wall collapses and crushes your foot and there is a world where it does not. Both are equally beautiful, and both must be treated with the same love. This is the greatest task of all, but it is the secret of *tawakul*. It is the meaning of the *farmān* of Imām Karīm that if you have faith, even if you may be sad, you will never be unhappy. Pray for this ‘*āshiq* that he reaches this *maqām*, and that he may know peace.

منك قوتي و أنت عصمتي يا رب العالمين

Minka Quwwati wā Anta ‘Ismatī Yā Rabb al-‘Alāmīn

From you is my strength, and through you I become infallible, O Lord of the Worlds!

This is a powerful verse. For it says that the believer becomes infallible through love and devotion to the Imām, and the recognition that everything comes from the Imām, who is the Lord of all the Universes. How does one achieve infallibility through the Imām? It does not require long, ascetic exercises, as some foolish people think. It requires only understanding. Infallibility is the fruit of *jnaya yoga*. Once some basic concepts are understood, infallibility naturally follows.

Imagine that you have a cup of water in front of you. You know that someone has poisoned it. You would therefore not make the mistake of drinking that cup of water, because you know it is poisoned. You therefore become infallible from making the mistake of drinking that water. It is only because of your knowledge that you become immune. Now, take this analogy to the spiritual level. If you know and understand what the effects of your acts are on your soul, you would not do them. If you knew that backbiting was literally like eating the dead flesh of your brother, you would not do it. The more you know, the more infallible you become on the level of action.

Then there is infallibility on the level of knowledge. This is a very simple process. All knowledge comes from searching and striving. You will find things that may seem to be true, and things that seem to be false, and may not know the truth of the matter. What do you do? Do you write a letter to Mawlānā Hāḍir Imām every time a question comes up? Non-sense! Of course the Imām has created a better system than that, and that system is called *taqrīr wa tasdīd*. You put in your effort, as is expected to you, and then you trust Allah’s promise:

و الذين جاهدوا فينا لنهدينهم سبلنا

Those who strive for us, we will surely guide them to our paths.¹⁴

This striving is key. Ja’far ibn Manṣūr explains it in his *Kitāb al-Kashf*:

The explanation of Allāh’s words: “The call is given to the people and they come on feet”¹⁵ means that they walk to the *hajj* rather than riding. His words “on every lean camel” means that they ride in on camels and other four legged creations. A similar statement is “And if you are afraid, then on foot or riding.” The one who goes on *hajj* on foot is like the believer who responds to the *da’wah* and enters into the covenant of the Imam, however does not rise in ranks to the hierarchy of Preachers from the believers. The one who comes in on a mount is like the one who does rise up in the ranks of the preachers, and reaches the highest levels of the spiritual hierarchy.

¹⁴29:69

¹⁵20:108

On the esoteric level, all of this refers to the person who struggles (*ijtihada*) in seeking the source of what created him, and calls upon, and works on the basis of the knowledge that he has, and with the spiritual hierarchy which the degrees of spirituality are related to. What this indicates is that it is not obligatory for the believer to stop at the exoteric knowledge, without stopping at the esoteric knowledge. The one at the first level must continue to strive until his level is increased, and the esoteric is not reached except by struggle and by *ijtihād* in both practice and seeking, just as *hajj* is not completed in the exoteric level except by exhausting oneself and one's mount in the journey. A believer's mount in the esoteric is his intention, his belief, and his insight. And so if his intention is high and reaches the sufficient degree of struggle, then he will find what he needs from his religion, and Allāh will bestow his secret upon him.

Once this striving is complete, however, one may still not know if one has hit upon the truth or not. Does one simply give up, and say "Allāh knows best," the way Sunnis and Twelver Shi'ites do? Never! One trusts in God that He will fulfill His promise to validate the truth and invalidate falsehood. He says:

و ليحق الحق و يبطل الباطل

Indeed, He will validate the truth and invalidate falsehood.¹⁶

Allāh does not allow falsehood to run rampant. Allāh will establish clear proof that something is false if it is false. If there is no such clear proof against something, then the spiritual seeker knows that He has Allāh's tacit consent, His *taqrīr*. That is all that is needed to have infallibility in the level of knowledge, is to know that Allāh has not, in some way or another, refuted your understanding. Your understanding may, of course, be an *upaya*, and it may be refuted at a later date, but it is the truth for you at that moment and you should accept it. But one must always continue to strive and struggle and seek true knowledge, and as long as one is sincere in that struggle one will be guided. This is a promise. Without belief in this promise, there is no religion. If falsehood is allowed to appear as truth and truth is allowed to appear as falsehood, then one should simply give up on finding the straight path and simply do whatever one feels is right.

اللهم صلى على محمد المصطفى و على علي المرتضى و الائمة الأطهر و على حجة الأمر صاحب الزمان و
العصر الإمام الحاضر الموجود شاه كريم الحسيني

Allahumma ṣali ‘alā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā wa ‘alā ‘Alī al-Murtaḍā wa ‘alā al-
‘Aimmah al-Athar wa ‘alā Ḥujjat al-Amri Ṣāhib az-Zamān wa al-‘Asr al-Ḥādir al-
Mawjūd Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

O Allah, bless Muhammad the Chosen One and Ali the Elected One and the Pure Imams
and the Proof of the Command, Master of the Time and Age, the Present and existing
Imam Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

The words translated as "O Allāh" is *Allahumma*, which comes from the Hebrew *Elohim*, which means, literally, Gods. It is praying to God in every aspect of His Divinity, by all of His Divine Names. We then ask him to send down blessings upon Muhammad the Chosen one, the one whom Allāh has selected from amongst His Servants to be a messenger, and upon ‘Alī, the elected one with whom Allāh is eternally

¹⁶ 8:8

pleased because he is His own Self, and upon the pure Imāms, who are absolutely infallible from birth. This is a prayer of affirmation, a prayer that is not asking for something to come into being that is not, but rather is affirming that Allāh sends down blessings eternally upon the Imāms and the Prophet. It is stepping into an ocean of blessings that is emerging from the heavens, and becoming awash in it oneself. Whatever blessing Allāh sends down, when one makes this prayer of affirmation, it comes down to them too.

The Proof of the Command means that the Imām is the manifestation (*zuhūr*) of the Divine Command. The Imām is a being who exists entirely in the imperative; He is the command “Be”, and is ever calling His Creation to higher and higher levels of evolution. He is constantly calling that which lies dormant *in potentia* to emerge from darkness and become *in actuo*, summoning everything that can be from the depths of darkness into the light. This is the *ta’wīl* of the verse:

الله ولي الذين امنوا يخرجهم من ظلمات إلى النور الذين كافروا أوليائهم الطاغوت يخرجهم من نور إلى ظلمات
Allāh is the guardian (*wālī*) of those who believe, taking them out of darkness into light, and those who disbelieve, their guardian is the idols, taking them from light into darkness.¹⁷

Darkness here refers to existence *in potentia*, whereas light refers to existence *in actuo*. Notice that Allāh uses the feminine form of the verb “bring out” here when referring to the idols, with the feminine here representing the *yang* element of darkness. Allāh constantly seeks to active what is potential and bring into being, while the idols (the Antagonists, the anti-Imāms, the one who falsely claims Imāmah against the Imām of the Age, such as ‘Ali Khamene’i, Supreme Leader of Iran, or Ṭalibān leader Mulla ‘Umar, who claimed to be Amīr al-Mu’minīn). As time progresses, everything that can become, does become, even within a single universe. This is what Nietzsche referred to as the eternal recurrence of the same. One must live one’s life with this knowledge, and to know happiness is to live one’s life in such a way that one is happy to know it will be repeated again and again. This is, once again, the true spirit of *tawakul*, which embodies the first part of the *du’ā*.

The Imām is referred to as *al-ḥāḍir al-mawjūd*, the “present, existing” or more literally “the present, the found,” because there is no escape from him. The Imāms have said in many *farmāns* that they are the Face of Allāh, and Allāh has said “Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allāh.” The Imām embraces all, and is absolutely everywhere. For this reason Imām Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh said that wherever He looks, He sees only Himself.

¹⁷ 2:257

Part II

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله و أطيعوا الرسول و أولي الأمر منكم
Bismallāhi ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm Ya Ayuḥa Aladhīna Aminū Atīū’ Allāha wa Atīū’ ar-
Rasūl a Ulī al-‘Amr Minkum

In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Mercy Giving. O you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Prophet and the guardians of the command from amongst you.

This verse establishes the basic principle of Imāmah. Notice that there are two commands and three objects in this verse. The two commands are to obey Allāh, and then to obey the Prophet and the guardians of the command from amongst you. The command to obey the Prophet is unrestricted (*muṭlaq*). This is because of the Prophet’s infallibility, which is established by the verse

و ما ينطق عن الهوى

He does not speak from his desire.¹⁸

The command to obey the Prophet and to obey the guardians of the command is a *single* command. It is from one root (*sankh wahid*), and therefore the command to obey the holders of authority is as equally binding as the command to obey the Prophet. Since it is one command, and since the obedience to the Prophet is unrestricted (*muṭlaq*), then obedience to the guardians of the command is equally unrestricted. This can only mean that they, too, do not speak from their own desires, and are infallible as the Prophet. Furthermore, if the guardians of command were not infallible, then they would make mistakes and commit sins. Yet they would still be ordered to be obeyed in an unrestricted fashion. This will clash with the first command, which is “obey Allāh.” If they were not infallible and were making mistakes and committing sins, then by ordering us to obey them in a blanket and unrestricted way would amount to Allāh ordering us to disobey Him, which is self-contradictory (*mutanāqid*), and therefore impossible. As such, it establishes that the holders of authority are infallible, and those who comment upon the Qur’ān based on their own desires and believe this verse means that one must follow *whoever* holds the exoteric power are both foolish and stupid, and have not contemplated the verse properly. They are fulfilling the prophecy of the Prophet Muḥammad, who said that the time will come when people will read the Qur’ān and not understand its meaning. Some of them, such as the Wahhābis, even go so far as to say the Prophet was not infallible, in blatant disregard of the verses spoken of above. They then complain that the Shī’ah do not follow the Qur’ān, while they have tossed its most important verses behind their backs, selling the signs of Allāh for a petty price.

Referring to them as the guardians of the command means that they are not just the holders of the command, but that they are the loci of its manifestation (*mazāhir*). The Divine Command is the highest entity in existence. It contains all, including the Creator and the Creation, as Nāṣir Khusraw has demonstrated. It is created from nothing or, put in the words of Imām Ja’far aṣ-Ṣādiq, it is created from its own self. Everything that exists above has its reflection below, and its reflection below is the Imām. By

¹⁸ 53:3

adoring the Imām, one adores the Divine Command, which pushes the universe forward through its inevitable evolution above. As William Pierce wrote:

The Purpose of the Creator is Self-completion; the Path of the Creator toward Self-completion is the Path of Life; and man is a step on this Path."¹⁹

Remember, sisters and brothers, that the path of Ismāʿīlism is the path of absolute theocracy. It is a call for the human being to transcend himself and to unite his partial intellect with that of the Universal Intellect, and this is accomplished through absolute obedience and submission to the *māẓhar* of the Universal Intellect, who is the Imām. It is not a call to a democratic institution where the spiritual elite are given as much of a vote as the spiritually filthy and impure. This commitment to the Imām is a religious and anti-materialistic conviction, one that causes the human being to transcend his own limitations and become Divine. It is *not* about a slavish morality of pure obedience. It is about seeking union (*ittiḥād*). It is *not* about annihilating the ego, as if Allāh accidentally created the ego and it is our job to fix this mistake by getting rid of it and handing its being back over to its source, as some foolish Ṣūfīs have argued. It is rather about the ego becoming the Ego, which is embodied in the absolute I, the *atmān*, of the Divine Command. It is then that one enters the spiritual state of paradise. As the Prophet has said, when one enters paradise, one is made like Allāh; they are given the power of the command, such that whenever they want a thing in paradise, they only have to say: “Be!”, and it is. Notice that there is no removal of desire in the realm of paradise. There is no need to abstain from all desire, or to become an ascetic who desires nothing but to worship. The Prophet has said: “Allāh loves to be worshipped in the things He has made permissible as much as he loves to be worshipped in the things He has made obligatory.” Fulfilling one’s allowable desires is an act of worship in and of itself, but most of us do not have the power to actualize those desires because we do not live in a state of spiritual paradise. If we did, we would have everything that we want, for we would become one with the guardians of the command.

The guardian of the command, the Imām, is the superman, the *übermensch*, of Islām. He is the one who transcends the human being, such that the ordinary human being is as laughable to him as the ape is to the ordinary human being. He recreates the moral order of the universe as he sees fit. In one cycle he imposes the bounds of the *sharīʿah*, and in the next cycle he breaks the chains of the law and moves the religion forward to its next state of evolution. At every stage he is saying “Be!” to what has laid dormant in the darkness of potentiality, bringing it from darkness to light. This process of “Be!” is a process of continual *Becoming*, meaning that Pure Being *is* Pure Becoming and that in time, everything possible eventually becomes manifest.

The guardians of the command is used in the plural here, even though in reality the guardian of the command is only one. There is only one Imām in existence, and there will always only be one Imām, and this is Imām ‘Alī. However, he takes on many forms and many garbs through his travel through time, moving from personal manifestation to personal manifestation, but always remaining one in his essence. When one Imām dies

¹⁹The Path 4:1

and another takes his place, it is merely the Body of Light of the Imām taking off one garb and putting on another. Therefore the command to obey the holders of authority is given in the plural, because one must not just obey one, but must obey all together. Obeying one Imām and disobeying another would be to tear asunder that which Allāh has ordered to be joined. Yes, Allāh has allowed that one Imām may abrogate another Imām's *farmān* based on the time and place, but this is not disobedience to the previous Imām. For the previous Imām has given *naṣṣ* to the next Imām, which means that his last command is to follow the next Imām in all things, even if it means abrogating a previous *farmān*. Therefore we watch the religion evolve, we watch the *du'ā* and our practices evolve, and we watch one Imām introduce something new that was not introduced by a previous Imām. Were it to be otherwise, the religion would remain stagnant, as it has for the *sharī'atīs*, many of whom run around now begging for new *ijtihād* to bring life back into their dead *sharī'ah*. They do not understand that the *sharī'ah* itself was abrogated in 1165 by Imām Ḥasan 'alā dhikrihi salām, and that in attempting to revive the religious Law they are attempting to imitate Jesus in raising the dead, something that will be impossible for anybody but the Imām and his spiritual representatives to do. They think of the Law as living, when in fact it is dead, and has been for a thousand years. And may it remain dead and buried! For slavery is not life, but merely existence, whereas the path of *ṭarīqah*, of love, is a path of passionate devotion, of the passion that makes life worth living.

اللهم يا مولانا أنت سلام و منك سلام و إليك يرجى السلام حينما ربنا بالسلام و أدخلنا دار السلام

Allahumma Yā Mawlānā Anta Salām wa Minka Salām wa Ilayka Yarja Salām Hayyana
Rabbanā bi As-Salam wa Idkhilna Dar as-Salām

O Allah, O our Lord, you are Peace and from you is Peace and to you is hoped all Peace.
Greet us with Peace, our Lord, and enter us into the Land of Peace.

The peace (*salām*) spoken of here is Salmān al-Fārsī, the *hujjah* of Imām 'Alī. Know that the terrestrial hierarchy is a triad: the Imām, the *hujjah*, and the Pīr. For every Imām there is a *hujjah*, a Proof, who points and indicates the way to the Imām. This has been explained in the *Faṣl dar Bayān-i Shanakt-i Imām*. Once again, we call upon Allāh in His Totality (*Allahumma*) and proclaim His Unity with all things. For we know that 'Alī is Allāh, from the teachings of Imām Shāh 'Alī Shāh, and we know that the Prophet has said: "Salmān is from us, the People of the House." Imām 'Alī has said that Salman is with us (as one) of (our own) family, the sun from the Light of God, a part of us (and) from us. The heart of a true believer is the Light of God, but no believer is as powerful as Salmān, although a believer is eternal in the two worlds." It is therefore fair to say to Allāh that He *is* Salmān, the eternal peace of the *hujjah*, whose task it is to initiate the Pīr and teach him the esoteric sciences. From Allāh comes the peace, meaning that Salmān is sent by Allāh in order to initiate the Pīr, and it is to him that we hope for the peace, i.e., it is to him that we hope to one day rise to the rank of *hujjah*, something that is obtainable by any believer who struggles and strives. We therefore ask him to greet us with peace, and to enter us into the Land of Peace, by making us a *hujjah* over His Creation.

By calling on Allāh as *rabbanā*, Our Lord, we are calling upon Him in all of his existentiations, just as we are when we say *allahumma*. This means that we are

appealing to every Divine Name and Attribute, not just one, in making this supplication. The supplication to reach the level of *ḥujjah* is therefore that important, for it is the highest rank of enlightenment that a human being can reach. Nobody can become the Imām, but even somebody who was born as a Zoroastrian like Salmān can achieve the rank of *ḥujjah*. How much easier then should it be for one born into the *ja'mah*! Yet we all fall short, and waste countless cycles of life and existence. Therefore we call upon all the names of Allāh together.

Know that the word Lord (*rabb*) is always used in a genitive construction within the Qur'ān and within the *du'ā*, it is always either “my Lord” or “your Lord” or “his Lord” or “her Lord” or “their Lord” or “our Lord.” Everybody has their own individual Lord, their own aspect of the Divine which faces towards them, and that is what is called upon when we say “*rabbī*”, My Lord. But one's personal Lord is only a key unto the Lord of Lords, which is Allāh Himself, and so here we are transcending our own personal Lord in order to pray to be entered into the realm of the *ḥujjah*. By making this prayer, we are first asking to arise to the rank of *pīr*, for it is the *pīr*, and the *pīr* alone, that the *ḥujjah* instructs. He is a reflection of the oneness of the Imām and so his teaching is one and unique. To arise from the darkness of ordinary, materialistic existence to the realm of the *ḥujjah* requires such power that it involves the energies of all the Divine Names put together. Therefore, we say *rabbānā*.

تبراکت ربنا و تعالیت یا ذا الجلال و الإکرام

Tabarakta Rabbānā wa Ta'alayta Yā Dhā al-Jalāl wa al-Ikrām

Self-Blessed be You, our Lord, and Self-Exalted be You, O Lord of Glory and Nobility

The verbal forms here imply that the action is being done on oneself. So we are not saying “blessed be you, our Lord,” but rather saying “Self-Blessed be you, our Lord,” or, more literally, “You have blessed yourself, our Lord.” The distinction is important, for it must be made clear that nobody blesses Allāh except Himself, and that nobody exists apart from Allāh. His Blessedness is his *jamālī* aspect, His Kindness and His Mercy, while His Self-Exaltation is His *jalālī* aspect, His aspect of transcendence. These two are united in the final part of the line, where we call upon Him as the Lord of both Glory and Nobility, of both *jalāl* and *jamāl*. This name is one of the most powerful names of Allāh, and its recitation can bring great spiritual insight. We say “our Lord” because we are calling upon Allāh, not the personal Lord; we are calling upon Him in His Totality, as the union of beauty and glory, as the meeting point of the two seas.

اللهم یا مولانا منك مددي و عليك معتمدي إياک نعبد و إياک نستعین یا علی بلطفک إدركني

Allahumma Yā Mawlāna Minka Madadī wa 'Alayka Mu'tamadī Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nastā'in Ya Alīyyun bi Luṭfika Idriknī.

O Allah, O our Lord, from you is our support and upon you we rely. You alone do we worship and from you alone do we seek aid. O Ali, by your grace, come to us.

In this part of the *du'ā* we are affirming the monoreality, by stating that it is only Allāh that we can possibly worship and only from Allāh that we can possibly seek existence, as we have already discussed in our commentary on the *fātiḥah*. These lines are inspired by the lines of the prayer *Nadī 'Alī al-Kabīrah*, the Great Recitation of *Nadī*

Alī, where we speak to Mawlā ‘Alī and say: “*Allahu ṣamadi wa alayka mu’tamidi wa minka madadi bi haqq iyyāka na’budu wa iyyāka nasta’in*”, “Allah is my Eternal One and upon you I rely and from you is my support (*madad*), by the truth of ‘to you alone do we worship and from you alone do we seek aid.’” This part of the *du’ā* is a larger form of our greeting, *Yā ‘Alī Madad*, “O ‘Ali, help!” It is a constant call to the ‘Alawi light to come to our aid and to fill us with its *nūr*, and to be the light by which we walk in this world of darkness. We call upon him to do this in his gentle mercy, and so we say “by your grace, come to us.”

It is only by his grace that he will come to us. One cannot force an experience of *fanā’ fi al-imām*, of annihilation in the Imām, no matter how one tries. When one sits in *bandagī* and meditates, one may find that one’s concentration is focused like a laser beam, yet no experience of annihilation comes. And one may find that one’s mind may wonder off, yet one suddenly comes to experience *fanā’*. This is why Mawlānā Ḥādīr Imām has said that it is not a problem if one’s mind wonders whilst in *bandagī* and prayer. What matters is the focus and the desire of the heart to be reached by Imām ‘Alī. We all have our individual capacity to receive His Light, but that light will be partially absorbed by the darkness of our own souls. What remains left will be the color that we reflect back, the color we are, our aura, and that aura is a reflection of our personality and our spiritual state. This is why we are ordered in the Qur’ān to seek total immersion in the light of Allāh such that our aura becomes absolutely pure, when He says:

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً

The baptism of Allāh, and who is better to give baptism than Allāh.²⁰

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله علي أمير المؤمنين علي الله مولانا شاه كريم الحسيني الإمام الحاضر الموجد
Lā ilaha ilā Allāh Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh ‘Alī Amīr al-Mu’min Ali Allāh Mawlana
Shāh Karīm al-Husaynī al-Imām al-Ḥādīr al-Mawjūd

There is no God but Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and ‘Ali is the Noble of Allāh, and Mawlāna Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī is the Present, Existing Imām

In this part of the *du’ā* we make our declaration of faith and renew our *ba’yah*. We begin with the double negation of “there is no God but Allāh,” a statement that contains no positive elements, but rather contains a negation (‘there is no God”), followed by another negation (“except Allāh”). This indicates that, on the level of the Divine Essence, Allāh neither exists, nor does not exist, but rather transcends all such dualities. Allāh has no opposite, and therefore to say that He is anything is to say that He is not something else, and that something else (even if it be non-existence) would be His opposite. Therefore He has no opposite on the level of existence. We then assert the intermediary term that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and then we come full circle again by asserting the *walāyah* of the Prince of Believers, and that ‘*Ali Sahī Allāh*, by saying *Alī ‘Alī Allāh*. and finally declare our allegiance to the Imām of our Age, who we see wherever we turn.

²⁰ 2:138

Part III

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم يا أيها الرسول بلغ ما أنزل إليك من ربك وإن لم تفعل فما بلغت رسالته والله يعصمك من الناس

Bismillāhi ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm Yā Ayyuhā ar-Rasūl Balliga Mā Unzila Ilayka Min Rabbika wa In Lam Taf'al Ma Balagta Risalatah wa Allāhu Ya'ṣimaka min An-Nās
In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Mercy Giving. O Prophet! Deliver the Message that has been sent down to you by your Lord, and if you do not do it, then will not have passed on his message. And Allāh will protect you from the people.

Here the Prophet's core message is being revealed. This verse was revealed concerning the Prophet's hesitation at announcing 'Alī as the Imām at Ghadīr. He was afraid that the jealousy of the companions, who were not spiritually developed, would lead to strife and civil war (and it certainly did; his fears were justified). Allāh does not tell the Prophet that this will not happen, but instead orders him to be steadfast.

The message that has been sent down is *Alī Sahī Allāh*. In some versions of the declaration of Ghadīr, the Prophet says: "Whoever I am the meaning of, 'Alī is His meaning as well." There is a triad of Meaning-Gate-Name within Shi'ism that is attested to in a number of *ḥadīths*, where the Imām is said to be the Meaning (*ma'ānī*). Imām Zayn al-'Abidīn says "We are the Meanings (*ma'ānī*) of God, forever circulating through your midst." Imām al-Bāqir says: "We are the Face of God, and Muḥammad is the Veil of God." Muḥammad, being the Prophet and Pīr, is the one who indicates and points towards the Imām, and is therefore like a Name for the Imām, but he is also a veil for the Imām, insofar as the Name veils that which it Names. This is one of the sad facts about language, that what reveals is also what conceals. The Imām, on the other hand, is the Meaning of the Divine. The Prophet is being ordered in this verse to give not only the message of 'Alī's *walayah*, but also to give the meaning of that message, which is *'Alī Sahī Allāh*. He is the Name, and Salmān is the Gate.

This is a message that would threaten the community. They had been taught previously of God's transcendence but not of Allāh's immanence in the form of the Imām. The Imām *is* Allāh; this is the gnosis that saves. But we must understand this correctly. His physical form is a *mazḥar* of his luminous form, and his luminous form is the *mazḥar* of the Divine Command. The relationship is *not* one of incarnation, as Christians understood Jesus (and Jesus was only a Name and a Veil, not the Meaning). It is rather a relationship of manifestation, of an image being cast. If we are to understand it metaphorically, the physical Imām is like the mirror, the luminous Imām is like the image, and the Universal Intellect is the entity casting the image.

The Prophet wants protection from the people in delivering this message, and so he is promised protection by Allāh. Allāh uses the same verb that is used for infallibility, meaning that the Prophet will be able to deliver this message perfectly: on the one hand he will say "Whoever I am the Lord of, 'Alī is his Lord as well," establishing the spiritual and political authority of Mawlā 'Alī, but he will also say: "Whoever I am the Meaning of, 'Alī is His Meaning as well," establishing the ontological infinity of the Imām and his union with the Universal Intellect. The Divine Essence, of course, transcends Meaning, Gate, and Name, but the Universal Intellect is the Meaning underlying all things. This is because the Universal Intellect is Pure Being (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), and so therefore is that which is the ground of all existing being. Everything

that exists is a ray of light from the Universal Intellect, is a drop in its ocean, and is an individual existention of its infinite being.

لا إله إلا الله الحي القيوم

Lā ilaha ila Allāh al-Ḥayyu al-Qayyum

There is no God, the Living, the Eternal

Here, Allāh is being spoken of as the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*). He is Living, and He is Self-Existing (*qayyum*). This is a profound teaching. Saying that He is Self-Existing means that He exists in and of Himself, that it is His Essence to exist, and that He could not not exist. This verse of the *duʿā* contains the ontological proof for the existence of God, namely that if you conceive of a being whose essence it is to exist, then that being must actually exist. If it did not exist, then it would not be its essence to exist, and so you would not be conceiving of it. The very fact that you can conceive of God proves his existence, because it is in the nature of that which you conceive (God) that it actually exist. It is a subtle but simple proof, that few understand because of its elegance.

Everything else that exists is a contingent existent (*mumkin al-wujūd*). This is why we say that everything that is, is Ya ‘Alī, because everything that exists depends on the Necessary Existent in order to exist. For anything that is a contingent existent is a possibly existing thing, and it is not in its essence to exist. It is not in the essence of the human being to exist, but is rather in the human being’s essence to be a rational animal. It may exist, or may not exist, unlike God, who *must* exist, by His very Essence. That which is not a necessary existent may or may not exist, and therefore requires something to bring it into existence. That is the Necessary Existent, which is Allāh, which is ‘Alī. *Alī Sahī Allāh*.

Yet this Necessary Existent is not a mere philosophical construct. It is *living*, which implies that it is conscious of itself. Its consciousness of itself is profound, for this means that it is like a person, though unlike any person that we know. He has an infinite variety of personalities, all united as an Absolute Individual. He is the Absolute Individual because there is nothing other than him, for the only thing other than Pure Being is Pure Non-Being, which is absolute nothingness. Therefore, there is literally nothing alongside of Him, and so He is absolutely unique. As such, everything that manifests him manifests this attribute of uniqueness to some degree. I am unique, you are unique, the tree outside your home is unique, all are unique, because they all manifest God, who is absolutely unique. This is the *taʿwīl* of the verse

قل هو الله أحد

Say: Allah is Absolutely One²¹

At the heart of every being, lies His absolute individuality.

Allāh, therefore, accords with *Ishvara* in Hinduism. He has personality, insofar as He has infinite personality and infinite uniqueness. His personality is so infinite that calling upon Him brings down all the Divine Names, though one may focus on a

²¹ 112:1

particular Divine Name for a particular need, such as *Ya Shāfi*, “O Healer!” to treat an illness. The entire science of *‘ilm al-jāfr* revolves around the use of such Divine Names for specific purposes.

This Necessary Being is conscious of Himself. There is no way to understand what this consciousness is like, for it is infinite. His knowledge, as Ibn Rushd demonstrates, is of a wholly different order than our own, for it is an *active* and *creative* knowledge. We human beings experience what Heidegger referred to as “thrownness,” of being thrown in a world not of our own making, but imagine what it is like to know when you’re knowledge creates the object it knows, rather than being created by it? It is impossible for the human mind that has not experienced annihilation in the Imām to understand what this is like. We receive input from the outside and our knowledge is formed based on this. His knowledge reaches *out* and *creates*, creating the entirety of the multiverse, for within the Divine Mind lies the image of everything that can possibly exist.

لا إله إلا الله الملك الحق المبين

Lā ilaha ilā Allāhu al-Malik al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn

“There is no God but Allah, the Manifest, True King.”

Being is the most manifest thing, and cannot be defined. Therefore, He is the most manifest. For Being has no genus nor any differentia by which it could be defined logically. Its genus is the overall category it fits under, and its differentia is what separates it from others. But Being has no genus, for there is nothing that Being “fits” under; it is the highest thing of all. It has no differentia, because there is nothing other than it from it to be separate from, except Pure Non-Being. Because it has no differentia, no *faṣl*, it is therefore infinite, and becomes manifest in infinite diversity in infinite combination. When Imām Zayn al-‘Abidīn says that the Imāms are the Meanings, therefore, He is saying that they are, in their body of lights, the *mazhar* of the Divine Command that contains the Creator and the Creation together within it. The simplest way to express this was chosen by Imām Shāh ‘Alī Shāh, when he said *‘Alī Sahī Allāh*, which means in actuality the Imām is Pure Being. Philosophically speaking, Muḥammad is the *name* of Allāh, while the Imām is Allāh Himself. This, as we have seen, is confirmed by the Qur’ān, which says

وكل شيء أحصيناه في إمام مبين

And everything we have enclosed inside a manifest Imām.²²

Everything that has being, is nothing but Ya Ali. Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God, and that is Alī, who is not only the Face of God, but the meaning of God. Imām ‘Alī says “I am the Heart of God,” further emphasizing that He is the Meaning underlying the Name of Allāh.

لا إله إلا الله الملك الحق اليقين

Lā ilaha ilā Alla al-Malik al-Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn

²² 36:12

There is no God but Allāh, the Certain, True King.”

We then say that there is no god but Allāh, who is *certain*. He is certain because He is Pure Being, and nobody can deny existence. How can a human being deny existence? We know from Descartes *cogito ergo sum*: I think, therefore, I am. The very act of denial affirms your own existence, and by affirming your own existence you affirm the existence of Being. Once God is not defined in a foolish way as a being amongst beings, but rather as Being itself, then there is no question of His Existence.

There can be no doubt at all, and for this reason there are no “tests of faith” in Ismā’īlism. Rather, one’s heart is tested *for* faith, to see if it has the capacity to have the *knowledge* and *certitude* that Allāh is Pure Being. For Allāh is the Greatest Being of all, as we say when we say Allāhu Akbar. If he were simply a being amongst other beings, then He would be dependent upon Being for his own existence. Therefore it would be false to say Allāhu Akbar, and it would be more proper to say this of Being itself.

One’s heart must be ready to bear this knowledge. For whatever happens in life, one will have certainty that God exists. One will not have the option to simply give up on God and fall into atheism, even if it seems the easy way out. One will have to continue to deal with Him, no matter how much pain and suffering is thrown one’s way. Many people cannot bear this and so they are not given the understanding of God that produces absolute certainty, the understanding that He is Pure Being itself.

لا إله إلا الله ملك يوم الدين

Lā ilaha ilā Allahu Malik Yawm ad-Dīn

There is no God but Allāh, King of the Day of Judgment

Finally we close this part of the section by saying that there is no God but Allāh, the Master of the Day of Judgment. Once one has made the previous affirmations, and truly made them with one’s heart, then one is ready to face Allāh on the Day of Judgment. Without the certainty of *what* He is, then one will not be able to bear His Light, and it will burn, and one will suffer Hell when one is reborn on the level of *jabarut* where the Day of Judgment occurs. As St. Catherine of Genoa said, “Hell is the light of God experienced by disbelievers.” One must ready oneself by approaching Allāh with a heart that is certain. When that happens, one will be consumed gently by the light, as Allāh Himself has said:

يا أيها النفس المطمئنة أرجعي إلى ربك راضية مرضية

O satisfied soul, return to your Lord pleased and well-pleasing.²³

The satisfied soul is the one that has come to certainty. *Nothing* brings satisfaction except certainty. It is within the abode of certainty that the soul comes to rest, peace, and tranquility. It is doubt that causes it to move about, to tremble, to lie awake at night in fear, to cause its heart to palpitate with fear at misunderstanding and confusion. Once it comes to understand the truth of things, it will find itself satisfied.

²³ 89:26-27

This is how one comes to know the Imām, as has been explained by the *ḥujjah* Ḥasan Ṣabbāh in his Four Chapters. He argues that the Imām is the one who gives *ta’līm*, instruction, and that he is the one that makes the intellect *in potentia* an intellect *in actu*. The Imām is the one who satisfies the burning need of the soul and the intellect for knowledge, who brings it from darkness and into light. Once that need is satisfied, one will find rest and satisfaction, and be free from doubt. That is when one knows that he has found the Imām, for he has been given doctrine that does not produce any doubt in the soul. This is the ultimate miracle of the Imām: the ability to silence all his opponents and to establish the absolute truth inside the heart of the one who seeks knowledge. To this end Allāh has said:

فله الحجة البالغة

To Allāh is the overwhelming proof.²⁴

لا فتى إلا علي لا سيف إلا ذو الفقار

Lā fatā ila Alīyyun La Sayf ilā Dhū al-Fiqār

There is no knight except ‘Alī, no sword except Dhū al-Fiqār

Here we acknowledge the Prophet’s great saying that there is no knight except ‘Alī, no sword except Dhū al-Fiqār, uttered by the Prophet. What does it mean to be a knight? It means to live a life of chivalry. What is chivalry? It is what was defined by Imām Mustanṣir bi Allāh II in his *Pandiyāt Javanmardi* where he says: “Any old woman can perform *namāz*. The religion of the true man [the knight] is the one who sacrifices everything for that which he loves.” Spiritual chivalry and love are intertwined, and it is only through absolute love and devotion to the Imām of the age that one becomes a spiritual knight. ‘Alī is the ultimate knight, because He is the manifestation of the Universal Intellect, which is lost in its passionate adoration (*wulh*) for the Divine Essence, and is therefore its knight on the plane of absolute being.

توسلوا عند المصائب بمولاكم الحاضر الموجد شاه كريم الحسيني

Tawasalū ‘and al-Maṣā’ib bi Mawlakum al-Ḥaḍir al-Mawjud Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

When tragedy comes, seek the intercession of your Lord, the Present and Existing Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

This is an order in the supplication, telling us to seek the intermediary of the Imām to return to the Ultimate Source, the Absolute Void of the Godhead. The “tragedy” that is spoken of here is not a tragedy at all except in the *ẓāhirī* sense. It is the death that occurs when one dies before they die, as the Prophet ordered. When that happens, one seeks the intercession of the Imām to return to the Absolute Void itself, the Black Light of the Divine Essence. One moves from that which is present and existing (the Imām) to that which is beyond existence and non-existence.

Part IV

²⁴ 6:149

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم إنّ الذين يبايعونك إنّما يبايعونك إنا يبايعون الله يد الله فوق أيديهم فمن نكث فإنما ينكث على نفسه و من أوفى بما عهد عليه الله فسيؤتاه أجرًا عظيمًا

Bismi Allāhi Ar-Raḥman Ar-Raḥīm Inna Aladhīna Yubā'iyūnaka Innama Yubā'yūnak Allāh Yad Allāhi Fawq Aydihim Fa Man Nakatha Fa Innama Yankathu 'Ala Nafshi wa Man Awfa bi Ma 'Ahada Alayhi Allah Fa Sayu'tihī Ajran 'Aẓīman

In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Mercy Giving. Indeed those who take the covenant (*ba'yah*) with you they take the covenant with Allāh. The Hand of Allah is above them. Whoever breaks it, breaks it against their own selves, and whoever holds to what they have covenanted with Allāh, they will receive a glorious reward.

The *ba'yah* is the bond of loyalty, the bond of spiritual chivalry and knighthood, between the Imām and between his *murīd*. This signifies that when one takes the oath of allegiance with the Prophet, that the Prophet is a *mazhar* of the *ḥujjah*, who in turn is a *mazhar* of the Imām, who is in turn the *mazhar* of Allāh. The Hand of Allāh is one of the titles of the Imām, for he is the power of the Imām in the Earth. Mawlā 'Alī says:

I am the guide and the guided. I am the father of the orphans, and the husband of the widows and the paupers. I am the shelter of every weak one, and the place of safety for all who fear. I am the one who leads the believers to paradise. I am the first rope of Allāh. I am the firm handhold of Allāh. I am the Eye of Allāh, and His Truthful Tongue. I am His Hand, and His Side, of which a soul will say: 'Woe upon me for what I neglected at the side of Allāh'. I am the Hand of Allāh, extended to His Servants with Mercy and Forgiveness. I am the gate of humility. He who knows me, and knows my Right, then *he knows his Lord*, because I am the inheritor of His Prophet, His Proof over Creation. No one rejects me, except that he rejects Allāh and His Prophet.

The glorious reward that is received is knowledge. It is the unitive knowledge of the Imām that comes from taking the spiritual covenant, where one clasps the hand of not just the physical Imām, but the Imām in his body of light. One must follow through on one's covenant, and one's covenant is to continually seek knowledge. Because the Universal Intellect is infinite, there is no end to the knowledge that can be received from it. To this end the Prophet said: "Seek knowledge, even in China" and "Whoever does not devote at least an hour of their week to studying the religion of Allāh, they will be cursed by Allāh." Too few in the *ṭarīqah* fail in this obligation, and so they stagnate and do not learn. There are many ways to learn. The study of the texts that have been passed down to us is one way, as is *bandage*. The ultimate knowledge comes from union with the Imām, where one literally becomes Him for a flash of a moment and comes away from the experience newly evolved, changed, and with a new life. That rebirth can keep happening again and again, without end. The spiritual road knows no end.

اللهم أغفر لنا ذنوبنا و أرزقنا و أرحمنا بحقّ رسلك المقربين و أنمّك المطهرين و بحقّ مولانا و إمامنا شاه كريم الحسيني

Allahumma Aghfir Lanā Dhunubana wa Arzaqnā wa Arḥamna bi Ḥaqq Rusulika al-Muqarrabin wa 'Aimmatika al-Muṭahhirīn wa bi Ḥaqq Mawlana wa Imāmina Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

O Allah, forgive us our sins and give us sustenance and have mercy on us, by the right of your close prophets, your purified Imāms, and by the right of our Lord and Imām Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī

This supplication is already answered by the mere fact of reciting *du'ā*. The sins of the believer are washed away by the act of prostrating before the Imām spiritually,

and entering into annihilation. The *murīd* ceases to exist, and so all his sins cease to exist with him. The sustenance (*rizq*) spoken of here is the knowledge that is imparted by virtue of reciting the *duʿā*. Every time one recites the *duʿā*, one learns something new, for every time one makes contact with Allāh one walks away with a new drop of light inside one's heart, a new experience of the Divine. The Mercy is already bestowed, for it is a mercy to be able to recite the *duʿā* to begin with, to have it in one's mind and soul, and to be able to step into the court of the King of Kings, the Imām of the Age.

All of this is sought through the Imām himself. The statement “by the right of” is a way of expressing the desire for intercession. Every *murīd* falls short and requires completion by the Imām of the Age, for the *murīd* only exists as a believer *in potentia*, and requires the *madad* of the Imām to become a believer *in actuo*. One therefore asks for the intercession of all the holy beings, the Prophets and the Imāms, in seeking to become a true believer, stainless and free of sin.

Part V

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تخونوا الله و الرسول و تخونوا أمانتكم و أنتم تعلمون
Bismillāhi ar-Raḥman ar-Raḥīm Yā Ayyahā Aladhīna Aminū Lā Takhūnū Allāh wa Ar-
Rasul wa Takhunū Amanātakum wa Antum Ta'lamūn

In the Name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Mercy Giving. O you who believe! Do not betray Allah and the Prophet, and do not betray your trusts, when you know.

This verse speaks of the *taʿwīl* of fasting. Fasting in the exoteric is to restrain from food and drink, but in the esoteric is to keep silent and maintain *taqiyyah*, religious dissimulation. One does not expose the secrets of the religion to those who are not worthy of it, but only to those who are *murīds* of the Imām. This is because, as Jesus said, one does not throw pearls in front of swine. It does no benefit to them, for their hearts have not become ready to absorb the precious gems of the Imāms that have been passed down. In fact, it can only do them harm, as it will expose them to spiritual danger as they will misunderstand and fall into misguidance. It is also the case that the *farmāns* of the Imāms are a private communication between the Imām and his spiritual children, and therefore is not for prying eyes. The necessity of secrecy is part of the sacred nature of the *farmāns*, and this even applies to *farmāns* that, on the surface, appear to only be about worldly, temporal affairs. Imam aṣ-Ṣādiq said: “When I say something, I intend by it seventy different levels of meanings,” so even a *farmān* about building a school has an esoteric meaning to it that must be contemplated and explored. Some are more explicit than others, but all contain a deep esoteric truth that not all are ready for. Therefore, it is forbidden to disclose *farmāns* to the public at large.

This is the trust that has been given. The other trust that has been given is the trust of one's existence itself. One does not, as Simone Veil argued, have to hand this trust back to God, as if God made some sort of mistake in creating your individual ego. Rather, your job is to polish the mirror of your soul such that it becomes a beacon of light of the Imām, and becomes a source of guidance and *sewa* to others. This is how one returns the trust, not by annihilating oneself (for why destroy that which Allāh has created?), but by using one's self properly to manifest the eternal Self, which is the Imām. Alī Sahī Allāh.

ربَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَ سَهِّلْ أُمُورَنَا وَ ارْزُقْنَا وَ أَرْحَمْنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
Rabbanā Agfir lanā dhunubāna wa Sahhil Amūrna wa Arzaqnā wa Arhamnā Innaka Ala
Kulli Shayin Qadīr
Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and make easier our affairs and give us sustenance indeed
you are powerful over all things.

This *du'ā* is nearly identical to the one before it, with the addition of asking that our affairs be made easier. This is also a supplication that is automatically answered, for one's affairs are made easier by the mere fact of reciting *du'ā* in the presence of the King of King of Kings. When we say that He is powerful over all thing, we are affirming not just that He can do everything, but that He *does* do everything: that He creates a multiverse of universes, an infinite variety of worlds where every possibility is played out, forever and ever, onto eternity.

If that is the case, is there no escape? Of course there is. As one polishes one's soul, one becomes reborn at higher and higher levels of existence, until one is reborn on the level of *jabarūt*. *Jabarūt* knows no cyclical time, but rather only knows *dahr*. There, there is no past, present or future, but only one single moment. This is the destination that the *murīd* seeks, but even there one does not stop, until one returns to the Absolute Void itself, to total *nirvana*, to the Godhead.

يا علي يا محمد ي محمد يا علي يا إمام الزمان يا مولانا أنت قوتي و أنت سندي و عليك تكلي يا حاضر يا موجود يا
شاه الكريم الحسيني أنت الإمام الحق المبين
Ya Alī Ya Muḥammad Yā Muḥammad Ya Alī Yā Imām az-Zamān Ya Mawlāna Anta
Quwwatī wa Anta Sanadī wa ‘Alayka Tikalī Yā Ḥādir Ya Mawjūd Ya Shah Karīm al-
Ḥusayni Anta al-Imām al-Haqq al-Mubīn

We begin by calling on Alī, then Muḥammad twice, then ‘Alī twice. This symbolizes the cyclical nature of existence and time, whereby we move from the Universal Intellect, down to the Universal Soul, and then back up again. The Universal Soul's own motion is circular like this, as it forever pursues the Universal Intellect out of its intense love for the Universal Intellect, but never reaching it. The entire universe is dragged along by its motion rotating with it as it pursues its Immortal Beloved. We then call upon the Imām of the Age, who is our intermediary to Allāh, and declare that He is the source of our strength and reliance and that upon Him we trust. The trust we have already discussed at length in the earlier part of the *du'ā*. We finally conclude by saying that He is the clear, manifest Imām, because as the Imām he is the *mazhar* of Pure Being, and is therefore the most manifest of all.

Part VI

اللهم بحق محمد المصطفى و علي المرتضى و فاطمة الزهرة و الحسن و الحسن اللهم بحق مولانا علي مولانا
الحسين مولانا زين العابدين مولانا محمد الباقر مولانا جعفر الصادق مولانا إسماعيل مولانا محمد بن إسماعيل
مولانا وافي أحمد مولانا تقي محمد مولانا راضي عبد الله مولانا محمد المهدي مولانا القائم مولانا المنصور مولانا
المعز مولانا العزيز مولانا الحاكم بأمر الله مولانا ظاهر مولانا المستنصر بالله مولانا نزار مولانا الهادي مولانا
المهدي مولانا القاهر مولانا علي ذكره السلام مولانا أعلى محمد مولانا جلال الدين حسن مولانا أعلى الدين محمد
مولانا ركن الدين خير شاه مولانا شمس الدين محمد مولانا قاسم شاه مولانا إسلام شاه مولانا محمد ابن إسلام شاه

مولانا المستنصر بالله مولانا عبد السلام مولانا غريب ميرزا مولانا إبي ذر علي مولانا مراد ميرزا مولانا ذي الفقار علي مولانا نور الدين علي مولانا خليل الله علي مولانا نزار مولانا سيد علي مولانا حسن علي مولانا قاسم علي مولانا أبي الحسن علي مولانا خليل الله علي مولانا شاه حسن علي مولانا شاه علي شاه مولانا سلطان محمد ساهو بحق مولانا وإمامنا الحاضر الموجود شاه كريم الحسيني إرحمنا و أغفر لنا إنك على كل شيء قدير و الحمد لله رب العالمين

Allahumma bi Haqq Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā wa Aḥlī al-Murtaḍa wa Fāṭimah az-Zahrā wa al-Ḥasani wa al-Husayni Allahumma bi Haqq Mawlānā ‘Alī Mawlānā Ḥusayn Mawlānā Zayn al-‘Abidīn Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Bāqir Mawlānā Ja’far aṣ-Ṣādiq Mawlānā Ismā’īl Mawlānā Muḥammad ibn Ismā’īl Mawlānā Wafī Aḥmad Mawlānā Taqī Muḥammad Mawlānā Rāḍī ‘Abd Allāh Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Mahdī Mawlānā al-Qā’im Mawlānā al-Manṣūr Mawlānā al-Mu’izz Mawlānā al-‘Azīz Mawlānā al-Hākīm bi Amrī Allāh Mawlānā Zāhir Mawlānā Mustansir bi Allāh Mawlānā Nizār Mawlānā al-Hādī Mawlānā al-Muḥtaḍī Mawlānā al-Qāhir Mawlānā ‘Alā Dhikrihī Salām Mawlānā ‘Alā Muḥammad Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Ḥasan Mawlānā ‘Ala ad-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlānā Rukn ad-Dīn Khurshaw Mawlānā Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlānā Qāsim Shāh Mawlānā Islām Shāh Mawlānā Muḥammad ibn Islām Shāh Mawlānā Mustansir bi Allah Mawlānā ‘Abd as-Salām Mawlānā Gharīb Mīrzā Mawlānā Abī Dharr ‘Alī Mawlānā Murād Mīrzā Mawlānā Dhī al-Fiqr Mawlānā Nur ad-Dīn ‘Alī Mawlānā Khafīl Allāh ‘Alī Mawlānā Nizar Mawlānā Sayyid ‘Alī Mawlānā Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Qasim ‘Alī Mawlānā Abī al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Khafīl Allāh ‘Alī Mawlānā Shāh Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Shāh ‘Alī Shāh Mawlānā Sulṭān Muḥammad Shah wa bi Haqq Mawlānā wa Imāmina al-Hādī al-Mawjūd Shāh Karīm al-Husaynī Arḥamna wa Agfir Lana Innaka ‘Alā Kullī Shayn Qadir Wa Alḥamdulillahi Rabb al-‘Alamīn.

O Allah by the Right of Muhammad the Chosen one and ‘Ali the Elected One and Fāṭimah the Radiant and Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, O Allah by the right of Mawlānā ‘Alī Mawlānā Ḥusayn Mawlānā Zayn al-‘Abidīn Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Bāqir Mawlānā Ja’far aṣ-Ṣādiq Mawlānā Ismā’īl Mawlānā Muḥammad ibn Ismā’īl Mawlānā Wafī Aḥmad Mawlānā Taqī Muḥammad Mawlānā Rāḍī ‘Abd Allāh Mawlānā Muḥammad al-Mahdī Mawlānā al-Qā’im Mawlānā al-Manṣūr Mawlānā al-Mu’izz Mawlānā al-‘Azīz Mawlānā al-Hākīm bi Amrī Allāh Mawlānā Zāhir Mawlānā Mustansir bi Allāh Mawlānā Nizār Mawlānā al-Hādī Mawlānā al-Muḥtaḍī Mawlānā al-Qāhir Mawlānā ‘Alā Dhikrihī Salām Mawlānā ‘Alā Muḥammad Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Ḥasan Mawlānā ‘Ala ad-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlānā Rukn ad-Dīn Khurshaw Mawlānā Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlānā Qāsim Shāh Mawlānā Islām Shāh Mawlānā Muḥammad ibn Islām Shāh Mawlānā Mustansir bi Allah Mawlānā ‘Abd as-Salām Mawlānā Gharīb Mīrzā Mawlānā Abū Dharr ‘Alī Mawlānā Murād Mīrzā Mawlānā Dhī al-Fiqr Mawlānā Nur ad-Dīn ‘Alī Mawlānā Khafīl Allāh ‘Alī Mawlānā Nizar Mawlānā Sayyid ‘Alī Mawlānā Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Qasim ‘Alī Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Khafīl Allāh ‘Alī Mawlānā Shāh Ḥasan ‘Alī Mawlānā Shāh ‘Alī Shāh Mawlānā Sulṭān Muḥammad Shah and by the right of our Lord and Imam, the Present and Existing Shāh Karīm al-Husaynī, have mercy upon us and forgive us, indeed you are powerful over all things, and praise be to Allāh, Lord of the worlds.

In this final part of the *du’ā* we make the grand *tawasūl* of all the Imāms. Their names are the most holy *dhikr*, and it is by such *dhikr* that the heart is brought to rest.

Every Imām's name has its own significance. 'Alī is the High because he is the highest of all the Imāms, the archetype of Imāmate. Ḥusayn means the lesser beautiful, in comparison to Ḥasan, for as the Imām he was more *jalālī* (glorious) and less beautiful (*jamālī*) than Ḥasan. Zayn al-'Abidin means the jewel of the worshippers, and it is because this Imām was known for his continual worship before the Divine Essence, so much so that his hands and knees became worn and calloused from so much prostration. Imam al-Bāqir was the one to begin breaking open the knowledge of Imāmah, and so was known as *bāqir al-'ulūm*, the one who breaks open the sciences. Imam Ja'far as-Ṣādiq was known as the truthful one, for all that he uttered was absolute truth. Imam Ismā'īl was the one who first went into hiding, and therefore was "sacrificed" in the *ẓāhir* by his fake funeral, in the way that Ismā'īl the son of Abraham was nearly sacrificed by his father. Imām Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl was named Muḥammad because he was the Qā'im of his time, the one to usher in a new cycle, and so he signifies a return to the time of Muḥammad when the religion was new, for he renewed it once again. Imam Wāfi Aḥmad is the one who held fast to the new covenant, for *wafī* means one who fulfils his promise, and he was the one to first begin spreading the new philosophical teachings of the faith. Imam Taqī Muḥammad was known for his purity and piety, hence the appellation *taqī*, and he was one of the leaders of the Brothers of Purity, the early Ismā'īlī philosophical association. Imām Rādī 'Abd Allah symbolizes being eternally pleased with the Divine decree, and having the spirit of *tawakkul*.

Imām Muḥammad al-Mahdī is also one to open up a new cycle, a cycle where the *da'wah* is driving towards conquest. He is called the Mahdī because he guides towards a hidden affair. Imam al-Qā'im was a recluse and was the Qā'im of his era, ushering in the intellectual tradition of the Fātimids after the initial conquest of his father, but remaining secluded and aloof from worldly affairs. Imam al-Manṣūr continued the conquests, and was therefore known as the "victorious," the one given *naṣr* by Allāh. Imam al-Mu'izz was the one to "give glory" to the religion of Allāh, and was the one to found the great city of Cairo and bring the intellectual golden age of the Fātimids to its full fruition. Imām al-'Azīz, the Mighty Imām, represents the might of Imāmah even when one is a child, as he was. Imām al-Hākīm, the "ruling Imām", was known for his harsh rule with those inside the *da'wah*, executing those who deviated even in the most minor way. Mawlāna Mustansir lived in a time where the empire was at its peak but also on its last legs because of the corruption that had set inside the military and political apparatus, and so his name means the one who "seeks victory" from Allāh, unlike his great great grandfather, who was given the victory. Together with the three hidden Imāms, they form the eleven Mahdīs prophecized by Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq when he said:

Indeed, after the prophet there will be *seven* inheritors, Imams, upon whom obedience has been made obligatory. The *seventh* of them will be the Qa'im, if Allah the Mighty and Wise wills he will come soon, and if He wills he will come later, and He is the Mighty and Wise. Then, after the Qa'im there will be eleven Mahdis from the progeny of Husayn." His companion said to him: "May my soul be your sacrifice! Tell me who this Seventh Imam will be? He said this three times. Finally, Imam as-Sadiq said "After me will be your Imam, and your Qa'im.

Imām Nizār's name is of Hebrew origin, and his forefather who had this name was a judge amongst the Jews, symbolizing that Imām Nizār is the cut-off point between truth and falsehood, between the true Ismā'īlī path and the false Ismā'īlī path

(that of the Musta'aliyyah). Imam al-Hādī means the guiding Imām and Imam al-Muhtadī means the guided Imām. Together they form a dyad, both being hidden Imāms, one following the guidance of the other in carving out a new empire in Persia. With Imām al-Qāhir, the dominant, the empire reaches its summit, and with Imam 'ala dhikrihī salām we have the Great Resurrection, the abrogation of the *sharī'ah*. His name means "may peace be upon his mention," for he brought peace by ending the master-slave relationship with God and opening up the relationship of lover and beloved. Imām 'Alā Muḥammad, whose name also means the High, shows a return to the 'Alawid light after the Resurrection. Imam Jalāl ad-Dīn Ḥasan was named after Imām Ḥasan because Imām Ḥasan was the caliph of the Prophet, and it was Imām Jalāl ad-Dīn Ḥasan who returned the community to the practice of the *sharī'ah* after its abrogation by Imam 'ala dhikrihī salām. Imam 'Alā ad-Dīn Muḥammad means "the most of the faith," also symbolizing that the 'Alawid light continued even while the community was existing in *taqiyyah*. Imām Rukn ad-Din Khurshaw, who was martyred by the Mongols, means "the pillar of the faith," showing that the faith remains strong and fixed even in its darkest hour, and by the sacrifice of the Imāms continues on in strength.

Imām Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad escaped alive from Ālamūt after it was destroyed and his father was killed, and so he signifies the sun rising after the dawn. Imām Qāsim Shāh, the just king, signifies justice, that the balance was restored after the destruction of Ālamūt. Imām Islām Shāh signifies that the Imām is the embodiment of Islām and submission, and that even after the tragedy of Ālamūt, the physical Imām remains submissive to the will of the luminous Imām in all things. Imām Muḥammad ibn Islām Shāh signifies that Muḥammad, the Pīrship, is the child of Islām, true submission. Imām Mustanṣir bi Allāh II was also seeking victory at a time of darkness, just like his forefather at the end of the Fāṭimid period. Mawlānā 'Abd as-Salām, the servant of Peace, was named this because of his intense love and desire for peace; he was a near pacifist. Imām Gharīb Mīrza, the "stranger," was named so because he moved the seat of Imāmah to Anjudan. Mawlānā Abī Dharr 'Alī was named after one of the great Shī'ah of Imām 'Alī, who was exiled by 'Uthmān, just as the Imāms lived in a state of exile during this time. Mawlāna Murād Mirzā, the "Desired" one, signifies that there is no beloved except the Imām. Imām Dhū al-Fiqār 'Alī signifies that every Imām embodies the sword of Imām 'Alī, through which the heavens are rent and the celestial hierarchy becomes visible to the earthly hierarchy. Imām Nur ad-Dīn 'Alī signifies that the Imām is the Light of Faith in darkness, as the community began to revive itself after the destruction of Ālamūt. Imām Khafīl Allāh 'Alī signifies that the true *khaḥīl*, intimate friend of Allāh, is 'Alī, and he is the one who is totally absorbed within the Divine Light of his father. Imām Nizār was named once again in honor of his forefather, as an eternal reminder that we are on the path of Imām Nizār and no other. Imām Sayyid 'Ali, the Master 'Alī, symbolizes the lordship of 'Alī in all things. Imām Ḥasan 'Ali symbolizes that even in the *jalāl* of the Imām, there is still *jamāl* as well, and so the Imām is both beautiful (*ḥasan*) and high ('*Alī*). Imām Qāsim 'Alī once again symbolizes the justice of Imāmah, in that Allāh always provides a waypoint and a guide for those who seek guidance. Imām Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī, the "father of Ḥasan" derives his name from the *kunya*, the patronym, of his great forefather Imām 'Alī, and means that the Imām is the father of all beauty that exists in the world. Imām Khafīl Allāh 'Alī once again symbolizes the *takhalul* of the Imāms, their absorption in the Divine Light.

Imām Shāh Ḥasan ‘Alī, the first Aga Khān, was known for his beauty as a warrior and as a knight of God. Imām Shāh ‘Alī Shāh was the King of Kings, hence the repetition of the name Shāh in His Name. Imām Sulṭan Muḥammad Shāh was called so because he was both King (the Imām) and Muḥammad (the Pīr) in one. And finally we call upon our present Imām, Imām Karīm, the “noble Imām,” whose generosity and kindness is famous throughout the world. We end the supplication by praising Allāh, Lord of the Worlds, who creates everything and is powerful over everything, and bowing in final prostration.